

COLÉGIO DE ALFRAGIDE

Twitter in the Classroom

The description of an experience

Ana Dominguez

01-09-2009

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In a caring and stimulating environment, the child will have the opportunity to express him/herself verbally, communicate with an adult and with peers, thus improving vocabulary and building more correct and elaborate sentences; discovering the efficiency of language, by applying a certain phrase/expression both correctly and at “the right moment”. Whilst feeling loved and stimulated, the child’s self-esteem is boosted, enabling the child to adventure him/herself in conquering the surrounding environment, simultaneously building her/his “language” and discovering that language may be a precious tool for this conquest.

Kindergarten and pre-school education arises as a continuation of a whole process and as a need confirmed long before by psychologists and educators, given that, on its own, it is a source of experiences and possibilities, which goes beyond family, conductor of a good global development and of an endless number of advantages for all those children who can benefit from it.

The daily interaction with the educator is a never-ending source of stimuli for the child. It is very important for the educator to be aware that he/she is a model, that many words are heard for the first time through the educator, that there are structural and usage rules which are fossilised in kindergarten. In that sense, it is important that the conversational attitude between child and adult follows certain guidelines to facilitate the process of language development. Children need opportunities to have conversations, which requires time and space on the adult’s behalf to listen and chat with the child (Sim Sim, Silva & Nunes, 2008)

The educator has a fundamental role in the creation of intellectual stimuli, in fostering experiences and discovery, as well as means which develop children’s linguistic skills. A book is an extremely important means, and it is through it that children move on to “reading”. The image and the word become two differentiated aspects to be decoded by the child.

Language is used in a social context to express what we wish, what we think and, not least importantly, to initiate, maintain and control social interactions. To know a language entails mastering the different structural aspects of that language (sounds, words and sentence-building rules), but also rules of appropriacy in a given context which are essential in conversation. Conversation is a form of communicative verbal interaction. In conversations, language becomes a social tool used to express requests and give orders, ask questions, make demands, blackmail, lie, thank and control social interactions. The organisation of a conversation implies the knowledge of a set of rules of language use, that is, knowing what to say, to whom and how to say it. Our communicative competence depends on the knowledge of the usage of the language in which we are communicating, in other words, the pragmatics of that language (Sim Sim, Silva & Nunes, 2008)

As the child develops, conversational exchanges become more and more elaborate and the child becomes more competent in transmitting his/her intentions and more competent when it comes to understanding the interlocutor’s intentions. (Sim Sim, Silva, & Nunes, 2008)

Thus lies my need to introduce twitter in the classroom.

What is twitter?

Twitter is a micro-blogging service created to answer the question “What are you doing?” It is much more than just answering the question “What are you doing?” It is a way of establishing relationships which enables us to exchange links, share interests, spread news, chat, and also market business.

(Twitter User Guide)

How and why do I use this service in class?

Because I find it to be an interesting and feasible way to develop literacy. The possibility of interacting with other people, other educators, other schools, makes it more exciting; we are always expecting other people to share their experiences with us, which, at the same time, leads to students looking forward to these short periods of time in which we “speak, tell, invite, greet, etc”.

At the end of each morning and afternoon, I use twitter as a “recap of the day” and, at the same time, a chilling out period. I sit in front of the computer with my students around me and we follow these rules:

- Everyone can and should speak.
- Children must raise their hands and wait their turns.
- We listen carefully and give each one the necessary time to build their sentences.
- We cannot repeat sentences.
- We accept that one, two or three classmates may add details to the initial sentence.
- We introduce songs and chants.
- I always read out what each student says.
- Every person who interacts with us on twitter is invited to “follow” us.

According to the rules I have set, I always try to:

- Answer each one.
- Encourage sentences.
- Suggest new themes/topics.
- If there is interaction, I read out what was said and ask for help in replying to whoever is interacting with the group.

This year I am using the hashtag #sala4anadz; as of September it will be #sala5anadz.

See you soon!

Ana Dominguez, Nursery School Teacher at Colégio de Alfragide

Bibliography

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